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ABSTRACT

In the spirit of the postmodern movement, this paper mixes the genres of survey research, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis to comment on governance in the media age. Using these methods, the paper traces the movement of a particular issue, international child abductions, on the agendas of the press, the public, and policy elites. Ultimately, the agenda-history of this issue is found to be a case study in cultural constraints on mass-mediated political power. Results of the study reported in the paper suggest that media logic--the epistemology of the vivid instance and the dramatic case--contains within it the counterpoised tendencies toward both the imposition of meaning and the dissipation of meaning--that normalization can be frustrated by fragmentation--and that it is impossible to predict how these tendencies will "play out" in any particular situation. The paper concludes that politics is, then, a game played under the rules of postmodern media culture, a "game of truth effects" as Baudrillard maintains, but also a game of power that is still real enough to matter. Two tables of data are included and 30 references are attached. (RS)

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AGENDA-SETTING AS POLITICS:
A CASE STUDY OF THE PRESS-PUBLIC-POLICY CONNECTION
AT THE POST-MODERN MOMENT

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ABSTRACT

AGENDA-SETTING AS POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF THE PRESS-PUBLIC-POLICY CONNECTION AT THE POSTMODERN MOMENT

In the spirit of the postmodern moment, this paper mixes the genres of survey research, in-depth interviews and textual analysis to comment on governance in the media age. Using these methods, the research traces the movement of a particular issue, international child abductions, on the agendas of the press, the public and policy elites. Ultimately, the agenda-history of this issue is found to be a case study in cultural constraints on mass-mediated political power. The study concludes that media logic - the epistemology of the vivid instance and the dramatic case - contains within it the counterpoised tendencies toward both the imposition of meaning and the dissipation of meaning - that normalization can be frustrated by fragmentation - and that it is impossible to predict how these tendencies will 'play out' in any particular situation. Politics is, then, a game played under the rules of postmodern media culture, a "game of truth effects" as Baudrillard maintains, but a game of power that is still real enough to matter.

More than a quarter-century has passed since Bernard Cohen composed the words that will live as long as there are communication researchers in need of a project: "[the press] may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (1963:13). And more than 15 years have passed since McCombs & Shaw (1972) devised the research paradigm which directs those researchers in the collection of their data: the comparison of issues covered by the news media to issues believed to be important by the audience.

After all these years, literature reviewers such as Swanson (1988) are able to cite an impressive list of empirical studies on the relationship between media and 'public' (i.e. aggregated individual) agendas. Swanson finds, however, that most such studies are conceptually ad hoc; that is, their theoretical framework is merely a restatement of the agenda-setting hypothesis. A few studies do attempt to specify the individual motives that may mediate the relationship between media and public; but Swanson finds that these studies lack a sophisticated psychology of motivation. And missing altogether is any attempt to locate the agenda-setting 'effect' in any larger social or cultural context.

The point of Swanson's critique is that agenda research must provide more comprehensive and compelling answers to the "fundamental questions about the role of mass media in society" (1988:603) than it has managed in the last quarter century. These questions still include the traditional concern of agenda-setting research: how media attention influences or reflects public concern. However, they also include how media attention and public concern influence or reflect the priorities of policymakers and - most provocatively - whether the

media are now the surrogate for the public. For Swanson, the questions left unanswered by agenda research are exactly "the sorts of questions that remind us of why mass communication is worth studying." And so, it seems, the literature on agenda-setting has been stunningly successful in telling people what data to collect but it has not been very successful in telling its readers why they should care about it.

AGENDA-SETTING AS POSTMODERN POLITICS

If, as these "fundamental questions" imply, the appropriate conceptual context for agenda research is the study of democracy - such as it is - in an age of mass-mediated politics, we need a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing the behavior of socio-political institutions as well as behavior within them. As Swanson observes, the conceptual and methodological apparatus of aggregate social psychology does not serve at the institutional level of analysis. We begin, then, with a vocabulary-building exercise that draws upon the rather staid political science of press-policymaker relations as well as the provocative postmodernist critique of media culture.

The first term in this institutional vocabulary is the concept of agenda-setting itself which means something quite different for the institutional 'policy agenda' than for the aggregate 'public agenda.' As illustrated by Linsky's case studies in which the press had "a huge and identifiable impact" on Washington policymaking (1986:87), the movement of a political issue or policy option up the policy agenda does not mean simply that the issue or option is more 'salient' to individual policy elites. Rather, it typically means that consideration of the problem has moved higher in the chain of command or that action on it has moved ahead in time. For example, press characterization of the neutron bomb as the weapon that 'kills people

but saves property' forced the decision on continued development out of the Pentagon and into the White House. And press attention to a preliminary study of health hazards posed by the toxic wastes in Love Canal forced the Environmental Protection Agency to speed up the relocation of area residents, a policy it probably would have undertaken anyway but with less haste. Unsurprisingly, Linksy finds that policymakers are reluctant to acknowledge any impact of the press on the substance (as opposed to the timing and location) of policy decisions. Ranney (1983) suggests, however, that one substantive impact is often the elimination of options from consideration. An example is the rejection by the Reagan administration of a tax on unemployment benefits after a leak generated negative press attention.

The cases reviewed by Linsky and Ranney are typically situations in which unwanted press attention intruded upon ongoing policy deliberations - or so it must have seemed to policy elites. In these particular cases, the elites essentially lost control of the agenda to the media and could do no more than react to the coverage. In other cases, however, elites may retain control by "getting in front of the story." Molotch, Protesse & Gordon (1987) provide an example in which Illinois authorities and two of Chicago's daily newspapers had all been conducting investigations of unsafe and unsanitary ambulances. When word got around that the Tribune would begin a series of reports on a Sunday, the Sun-Times began a pre-emptive, or "spoiler," series on Saturday. State and city officials got in front of them both, however, by initiating a crackdown on Friday. Although both newspapers tried to claim the crackdown as a response to their particular investigation neither attributed the problem itself to the inaction of authorities. In return, authorities credited the press

with helping to reveal the need for legislation to control greedy ambulance companies. Molotch and colleagues characterize this convergence of media and policymaker agendas as "an ad hoc coalition."

From policy elites' point of view, ad hoc coalitions with the media are better than post hoc reactions to them, but better still is a priori control of both the media and the policy process. If, in the early 1970s, the information connection between policymakers and the news media was a mimeograph machine in a government office connected by conveyor belt to a printing press (Sigal, 1973), by the late 1980s, it was a video recorder in the Congressional television studios connected by satellite to local television newsrooms and thence to home television screens (Smith, 1988). According to Smith's analysis of the Washington "power game," such developments are part of the "constant campaign" in which money and media are unceasingly sought. Favorable media attention may be generated by hard work on behalf of important legislation but it may also be generated by effective exploitation of 'casework' conducted ostensibly on behalf of needy and deserving constituents.

While the efforts to control the media agenda can often be quite direct, they can also be quite subtle as suggested by Fishman's (1978) analysis of the social construction of a crimewave against the elderly in New York. Crimewaves, Fishman argues, are constructed by the news media from 'crime incidents' each of which has been "stripped of the actual context of its occurrence so that it may be relocated in a new, symbolic context: the news theme" (1978:536). To accomplish such a construction project it is necessary to have a supply of crime incidents that can be interpreted or "thematized" as instances of a crimewave and for this, the media must rely upon police officials. In

this particular crimewave, the Senior Citizens Robbery Unit of the NYPD - a unit that let any interested reporter know that it was beleaguered and understaffed - provided what a Daily News reporter described as "considerable help" in producing a feature story and in locating crime incidents for followup stories. This seems not to have been an unwanted crimewave and the term 'information subsidy' (Gandy, 1982; Turk, 1986) seems to be an especially apt characterization of how the police department helped the media to construct it.

For Fishman, the interplay between reporters and officials is an engine of ideological production. The press is a means by which government can control its citizens. For Linsky and Ranney, on the other hand, this interplay can be a mechanism of governmental accountability. Under the proper circumstances, the press can still be a means by which citizens control their government. But if Linsky and Ranney implicitly invoke The People, they do not explicitly give them very much of a voice in the policy process. Linsky does review several instances in which media coverage motivated other elites to express their opinion thereby adding a "convergent voice" (Cook & Skogan, forthcoming) and further pressuring policymakers. For example, the governor of New York pressured the EPA to act on behalf of Love Canal area residents. But Linsky is able to tell his stories of "impact" with little mention of the public or public opinion, particularly the sort of opinion measured by agenda researchers.

Thus, we return to a fundamental question that served as our point of departure: What is the role of the agenda-setting effect and, indeed, the public itself in the policy process? Molotch, Protesse & Gordon (1987) argue that the "muckraking model" - journalistic investigation and publication that produces a change in public opinion

and, in turn, motivates policy initiatives - occasionally does account for policy change. From the muckraking era early in the twentieth century, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 is often cited as an outcome of this process. On the other hand, these authors cite a number of instances in which policy change occurred without opinion change (cf. Cook, et al., 1983; Protess, et al., 1987) and even instances in which policy change occurred without publication; knowledge that an investigation was underway was enough to make authorities act. Again, from the muckraking era, Lincoln Steffens (1931) reviews examples of this in his autobiography. From more recent times, Lang & Lang (1980, 1983) argue that Watergate was not the "battle for public opinion" that some have suggested. Public opinion may have influenced the pace of the proceedings in Congress but in the final analysis it was the law and the evidence rather than public opinion that determined the outcome.

Drawing upon their analysis of Watergate, Lang & Lang characterize the role of the public in the press-public-policy connection as that of 'bystander.' Media coverage, they argue, spotlights policy elites who use it both to communicate among themselves and to posture before an audience. The public consumes politics as spectacle (cf. Edelman, 1985); although it is always potentially available for mobilization around an issue or an opposition candidate. Its role in a policy dispute is "hardly that of a neutral arbiter but of a potential ally or enemy; it can shift the balance of power by the way it throws its weight around" (Lang & Lang, 1983:22).

To help anticipate where the weight of public opinion might come down should the public throw it around, elites return to the media. Policy elites "know that the published reaction does not always

accurately express public reaction, but this does not reduce their intense concern with media reports as the first clue to the responses of the public" (Lang & Lang, 1983:24). Perhaps the intensity of elite concern about reports that, after all, may "not always accurately express public reaction," is due to the fact that the media are not windows opening onto a view of the public but mirrors reflecting images of elites back to themselves. The news media, these authors conclude, "present political actors with a 'looking-glass image' of how they appear to onlookers" (1983:24). Much as Swanson suggests, reflections in the "looking-glass" media may often be surrogate for public opinion in the policy process.

This view of public affairs thus decenters the public and begins to replace it with mediated imagery. Indeed, such notions as 'bystander public' and 'looking-glass media' presage in an American political-science-sort-of-way several themes developed with Gaulic flair by Jean Baudrillard. The reality of social relations, says Baudrillard, has been supplanted by a mediated "hyperreality" - the continuous simulation of experience and endless replication of imagery. "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody," he writes in Simulacra and Simulations (1988:167). "It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double..."

Power relations are not immune to this process. Baudrillard sees "power itself eventually breaking apart...and becoming a simulation of power (disconnected from its aims and objectives, and dedicated to power effects and mass simulation)." Institutions of power thus fall into an ironic trap:

The only weapon of power, its only strategy against this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis, but also - why not? - the discourse of desire. (1988:179)

In a subsequent essay, "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media," Baudrillard investigates the condition of the audience in this hyper-mediated environment. Writing specifically of opinion polls, he argues that "we will never in future be able to separate reality from its statistical, simulative projection in the media" (1988:210). The result is "a state of suspense and of definitive uncertainty about reality...a completely new species of uncertainty, which results not from the lack of information but from information itself and even from an excess of information." The response of the audience to this uncertainty is disengagement: "the masses, which have always provided an alibi for political representation, take their revenge by allowing themselves the theatrical representation of the political scene" (1988:212). That is, to counter the injections of "realness and referentiality," the public assumes the role of spectator - not as passive reaction but as active counterstrategy. Cunningly, the masses escape into the hyperreal, into the very "simulative devices which are designed to capture them" (1988:213).

Of course, the theme of techno-economic destruction of the public represents a significant continuity from modern to postmodern thought. And yet, theorists of the postmodern do raise a significant challenge to typical conceptualizations of the relationship between press, public and policymakers. To postmodernists, the media are neither a means by which the government can control its citizens nor a means by which citizens can control their government. The media do not create

any real relationships between citizens and government through which power can be exercised. Rather, they participate in a "game of truth effects." For policymakers, they create the effect of (or, in Swanson's terms, surrogate for) a public; and for citizens, they create the effect of government. From this point of view, the agenda-setting effect is, indeed, only an effect.

What follows is a case study in the creation of such effects and an analysis of their implications for the study of mass-mediated political power. This study employs the vocabularies of agenda research as both a psychological and an institutional process though, of course, it is the institutional vocabulary - 'information subsidies' and so on - that is most useful in understanding the production of the agenda-effects experienced by both the public and policymakers. Specifically, this study focusses on one particular issue - international child abductions - that received in 1987-88 a burst of media and policymaker attention much like the issues analyzed by Linsky. The study also focusses upon a particular event in the history of that issue: the January 18, 1987 broadcast of a segment in the CBS television series, "60 Minutes." We do not, of course, argue that this broadcast was the cause of all that followed in the next 18 months, but it was a critical moment in the policy process and provides a focal point around which an account of the press-public-policy connection can be organized.

The account is constructed from open-ended, on-the-record interviews with journalists who played key roles in the development of the "60 Minutes" segment and with several of those involved in the policymaking activities that occurred in the year and a half after the broadcast. The account also draws upon media coverage of

international child abductions during this period as tracked through the National Newspaper Index, Chicago Tribune Index, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and other sources. And finally, the account draws upon three waves of telephone interviews with a national sample - one before the "60 Minutes" broadcast and two after it.

Ultimately, this account of the press-public-policy connection will prove to be a study of public affairs conducted within the media but without a public. It will deconstruct the ideas of 'issue' and 'agenda' and it will question the nature of media power. Appropriately enough, the confrontation with Baudrillard's "definitive uncertainty about reality" begins with what will be left after the notions of issue and agenda have fallen away: particular stories as first told by the master storytellers of "60 Minutes."

"60 MINUTES" EXPOSES THE EVIL THAT IS - WHY NOT? - NORWAY

"Whether you think of these children as missing depends on whether you're their Norwegian mother or their American father," begins Diane Sawyer. Over her shoulder is a picture of two children and the title of the segment, "Missing?" Sawyer continues:

The children are caught in a kind of legal no-man's land between Norway and the United States. That may seem surprising since Norway is America's old friend and NATO ally--not, you'd think, the kind of country that would help its citizens defy American law, which is exactly what we thought too...

Next we seen a beautiful landscape and handsome people. "It's a dream country, Norway, picturesque and tranquil," says Sawyer. "And that's what an American named Larry Risk expected when he came here on sabbatical in 1983 with his wife and two children. But instead, Larry Risk ended up living a nightmare." Sawyer's story begins when Risk's Norwegian-born wife decided to stay in Norway. Against his wife's wishes, Risk brought the children back to California where a court

awarded the parents joint custody under the condition that the children, both American-born, remain in the U.S. One day, however, Risk came home to find his children gone.

But this was not just another custody battle, Sawyer tells us, because "the Norwegian government was behind it all." Based upon documents first obtained by a reporter for the Norway Times, an English-language newspaper published in Brooklyn, we learn that the officials of the Norwegian government paid for airline tickets and issued documents to the children, incredibly enough, as Norwegian commercial seamen. Risk pursued his family to Norway only to find that authorities there helped to conceal his children from him. "I had no idea," he tells Sawyer ruefully, "that the Norwegian government was in the kidnapping business."

As the segment unfolds, we also meet Harald Johnstad whose story is remarkably similarly to Risk's. An Illinois court had given temporary custody of the couple's son to the mother on the condition she not leave the state. Johnstad received custody of a daughter whom, we are told, the mother did not want. But even before these custody arrangements were complete, the Norwegian government had sent telexes to its Chicago consulate asking if child abduction was illegal in Illinois and instructing officials to assist the mother. The words of the daughter bring this story to its inevitable conclusion. "I tried to stay awake because I had heard my mother and her lawyer talking about passports and travelling," she recalls of her last night with her brother. It seems the children were so afraid of being taken that they tied themselves together. "I eventually fell asleep but then when I woke up the next morning, he was gone..."

Next Sawyer herself is off to Norway to find the children and confront the villains. She does neither. The children remain concealed. The government officials refused to be interviewed although their treachery and deceit are symbolized by their office doors which remained closed to Sawyer and her crew. Sawyer can only report to her viewers that the U.S. State Department says it can do nothing and that a treaty on the return of abducted children has been approved by neither Norway nor the United States. "Over the past decade more than 2,000 children have been abducted to countries around the world," the segment concludes, "and no one knows if their American parents will ever see them again."

So concludes another exercise in the rhetoric of villainy and victimage that has made "60 Minutes" the most watched news program on television. Jan Legnitto, the producer of the segment, insisted that the stories of these fathers are a "microcosm" of a larger social issue-- international child abduction--but amid the pathos of these particular cases some relevant information seems to have been lost. Of the more than 2,000 cases mentioned in the segment, Norway accounts for only about a dozen. Germany, Great Britain, Mexico and a number of countries are all far more common destinations for abductors. Further, the abductors are more likely to be the fathers than the mothers of the children. Finally, government participation in the abductions, while rumored in some other cases, has not been widely documented.

Legnitto's response to the charge that these cases are atypical of the larger issue is to argue that her job is not really to produce documentaries about social issues. "Our focus is on the individual cases whose stories we are able to tell," she said. "We don't do the broad issues at '60 Minutes;' we do stories from which issues can

emerge." Thus the selection of these stories had little to do with their representativeness, as Legnitto herself made clear, and much more do with the practical concerns of the investigative journalism genre. According to Legnitto, this segment looked from the beginning to be eminently 'do-able,' as investigative reporters sometimes say (Ettema and Glasser, 1985). Indeed, the segment was essentially done by the time "60 Minutes" began work on it.

It was the fathers themselves who began work on their own cases. Both Risk and Johnstad had compiled a great deal of information and had aggressively sought media attention. Johnstad, with the help of the Norway Times reporter who was later interviewed by "60 Minutes," had obtained a number of documents, including the incriminating telexes, using Norwegian laws granting access to government records. Johnstad's first attempt to interest "60 Minutes" in his case had been ignored but late in 1984 he took his information to a local radio station, WBBM in Chicago, where it was received by a reporter named Scott Smith. "WBBM received a package that was out of the norm," recalled Smith. "It was clear to the managing editor and the news director that the information was not only compelling but that the man had done his homework." Johnstad also introduced Smith to Larry Risk. Smith immediately saw in these cases what Legnitto would later see: sympathetic victims, an unambiguous villain and good documentation.

Throughout 1985, Smith produced a number of reports including a one hour documentary in which a Norwegian official "danced around quite a bit," in Smith's phrase, but eventually "indicated that what Johnstad was alleging was, in fact, true." But while the cases began to get attention in Norway due to coverage in the Norway Times, Smith felt that they were getting less attention than they deserved in the

United States. In January of 1986, he took the cases to the Better Government Association, a Chicago-based privately financed 'watchdog' agency, whose staff also saw in them what Smith had seen. In turn, the BGA used its relationship with CBS to interest Legnitto in them. Legnitto and her staff reproduced the research done by the fathers and WBBM and she investigated more than 100 other cases. All of this research produced acceptable documentation for involvement of a foreign government only in these two cases. "Our choice of Norway had to do with accessibility of information," said Legnitto. "Norway may not be more guilty than the others but we couldn't find evidence that clearly implicated anyone but Norway." Ironically, then, it was the relative openness of the Norwegian government that made the segment "do-able" and, in turn, made Norway a villain.

While these abductions may not be very typical of all such cases, they are textbook examples of something else: stories that fit the format of "60 Minutes" and, more generally, the journalistic genre of the expose. There are victims whose stories, as Legnitto said, "pull at the heartstrings." These fathers, whatever the source of their marital problems may have been, now command sympathy because their children seem lost to them for all time. And there is a villain whose presence is ironically unexpected. The government of "America's old friend," Norway, commands condemnation because now it has betrayed American fathers and American courts. While the villain cannot be given a specific human face, it is represented by a beautiful landscape and handsome people as if to underscore its treachery. In the confrontation with the power of government, even the government of a small and friendly nation, these stories honor the populist legacy of the expose (Gans, 1980; Glasser and Ettema, 1989). Once again

investigative reporters have stood up to "the system" on behalf of that quintessentially American character, the little guy.

If these stories are representative of a journalistic tradition they are also textbooks cases of a contemporary journalistic practice: the use of information subsidies. While the original subsidy was not generated by a government agency or official, it was brokered by a "linking-pin organization" as Turow (1985) labels wire services, public relations agencies, special interest groups and other organizations that move information to and among media outlets. Like other successful brokers, The Better Government Association gained a hearing with Legnitto because it had long ago proven itself to be a reliable source of material that met the standards of its media clients. And like many other brokers, the BGA attempted to extend the information subsidy to those policymakers in a position to act and thereby share in the rewards of publicity. However, the attempt to build a press-policymaker coalition between "60 Minutes" and the Senate delegation from Illinois met with little success. Apparently, these policy elites were not quite ready to publicly address the policy issues raised by the cases. Anyway, Legnitto was uninterested in their participation because, like many reporters, she did not want to appear to be working for, or even with, government officials. She also felt that officials had done little on behalf of the fathers and therefore deserved no publicity. But no matter how reluctant Legnitto may have been to pass the information subsidy on, her participation in the policy process was over when her segmented aired in January, 1987.

THE PUBLIC RESPONSE

Our investigation of the response to "Missing?" began a few weeks before the segment aired when interviews were attempted with 1,051

respondents chosen from across the United States by a random digit dialing procedure. Of the calls attempted, 827 (78.7 percent) were completed yielding a sample divided into two strata: those who said that they usually watched "60 Minutes" (n=403) and those who said that they did not (n=424). And then, for a period of ten days after the segment was broadcast, 693 (83.8 percent) of the original respondents were recontacted. Of these, 96 could specifically recall the "Missing?" segment; 505 could not recall seeing the show at all; and the rest were not sure or could not be classified.

When we compared the 96 respondents who had definitely seen the segment with the 505 who had not, as shown in Table One, we could find no evidence of movement by 'missing children' on the audience's agenda of social ills. Using the analysis of covariance procedure to adjust for pre-test differences, the comparison of viewers' to nonviewers' post-test scores revealed no differences in the ratings of importance attached to the problem of missing children. Both viewers and nonviewers, in fact, saw this to be quite an important problem. Further, the comparison of viewers to nonviewers revealed no real differences in the ranking of missing children on a list of "problems that concern the American family." For both viewers and nonviewers, this problem was firmly entrenched at about the midpoint of a list that also included drug abuse, hunger, unemployment, divorce and inadequate day care services. Similarly, a question about the need for treaties to deal with international child abductions as well as a question about the likelihood of help from the U.S. government for Americans who have legal difficulties with citizens of other countries produced no differences between viewers and nonviewers. However, the one question that dealt with what the segment was really all about -

villainy - did produce a significant difference: those who had seen the segment thought that Norway had less respect for U.S. law than those who had not seen it.

We followed up with a second post-test about three months after the broadcast in which 74 of the viewers and 111 of the nonviewers were recontacted. All of the questions asked in the first post-test were asked again and all produced about the same results as before. However, we also asked some additional questions concerning child abductions. As shown in Table Two, both viewers and nonviewers thought the U.S. government "probably" should do something about the problem and both groups were about equally supportive of several policy options (although there was a statistically nonsignificant tendency for viewers to endorse most options more strongly than nonviewers). However, viewers and nonviewers once again differed in their perceptions of the villains at work here. Viewers were more likely to expect a mother rather than a father to abduct a child. Further, viewers ranked Norway as the second most likely destination for a child abductor from among five countries while nonviewers ranked it (quite correctly according to State Department statistics) as the least likely destination.

In sum, our analysis of audience response to "Missing?" could not generate much evidence for anything that can be characterized as agenda-setting. The effects we did detect can be characterized as 'incidental' and also 'perverse.' While the survey results confirm the presupposition of both media and policymakers that the public was sympathetic toward this issue, the results also indicate that America's imagination was not captured by the issue in the months after the "60 Minutes" broadcast. Indeed, only 16 of the 74 respondents who viewed

"Missing?" could recall any subsequent coverage of "international child abductions" when interviewed three months after the broadcast. Thus, the rest of our story about media and policymaking - and there is much more - can be told with little further mention of the public or public opinion, particularly the sort opinion measured here.

THE POLICY GAME

With its 'discovery' of international child abductions, "60 Minutes" entered a policy struggle within the federal government that, by 1987, had been underway for some time. In 1981, the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, a treaty which would resolve subsequent abduction cases by honoring the laws of the country from which the children were taken, had been signed by the United States and a number of other western nations. While the treaty had not been transmitted by the State Department to the Senate for ratification until 1985, the Senate gave its consent soon thereafter. However, the treaty still did not go into effect because enabling legislation which the State Department was to draft had not been transmitted to the Congress. Thus, the continuing delay in the implementation of the treaty rested with the State Department early in 1987 when the "60 Minutes" segment aired.

Several Senators, including Paul Simon (D-IL), Alan Dixon (D-IL) and Albert Gore (D-TN), had a particular interest in the issue. Simon's policy entrepreneurship on behalf of missing children went back a number years to his sponsorship of legislation that created the National Center for Missing Children. Dixon, like Gore, had become interested in the issue when constituents appealed for help in retrieving abducted children. While Dixon's cases included that of Harald Johnstad, the Senator and his staff had already put far more

effort into the case of Patricia Roush whose children had been abducted to Saudi Arabia by their father who was alleged to be mentally ill. This case was particularly tragic but it also held the tantalizing promise of resolution because Dixon and his staff had managed to interest a member of the Saudi royal family in it. However, arrangements for a meeting between the Saudi prince and the children's father had fallen apart when the U.S. ambassador, under orders from the State Department, declined to attend. Irritated with the State Departments' attempts to steer clear of this and other such cases, Dixon and his staff wanted to pressure the State Department to intervene in the Roush case.

Early in 1987, just as "Missing?" was nearing completion, Senator Simon who was increasingly preoccupied with in his presidential nomination bid asked his home state colleague to take responsibility for the treaty implementation legislation. Thus, Senator Dixon wanted to move two items higher on the State Department's agenda: action on the Hague Convention and attention to current abduction cases. It was into this policy game that "60 Minutes" and other media suddenly bounded as players on Dixon's team.

Ten days after the broadcast of "Missing?" Senator Dixon was ready to take control of the situation. He did so with a news conference in Washington to announce a drive to obtain the return of abducted American children. The Johnstad case was presented at the conference but the dramatic highlight was provided by Patricia Roush who, with "voice breaking" according the account in the Chicago Tribune, pleaded with the State Department for help in the return of her two little girls. Dixon characterized State Department inaction as "an outrage" and called upon other senators to sign a letter to the

Secretary of State demanding action. On that same day, a letter signed by 24 senators calling for an array of governmental measures was sent to Secretary George Schultz. Shortly thereafter, just as a constituent was forming an organization called American Children Held Hostage and organizing a letter-writing campaign in support of the treaty legislation, Senator Gore tried to get in front of the action by calling for Senate hearings to scrutinize government regulation of the documentation required to take children out of the country.

While Dixon's staff, much like Linsky's informants, refused to acknowledge any causal relationship between the "60 Minutes" segment and the direction or even timing of their own actions, their work does reveal a self-aware attempt to use media attention to move the issue on the State Department and Senate agenda. Sarah Pang, a Dixon legislative aid, said in an interview conducted by the research team one month after the "60 Minutes" broadcast that the segment and subsequent media coverage had helped to focus the attention of both the State Department and the Senate on the implementation legislation. "This has really stepped up everything," she said predicting that the legislation would soon "sail through" the rest of the process.

Pang insisted, however, that even with the treaty in effect, the State Department would still need to actively seek the return of the children and that Secretary Schultz himself should raise the issue in upcoming meetings with foreign officials. "Getting this on the State Department's agenda is crucial," Pang said. "For us, the answer is to keep the media focussed on this issue. That will produce the necessary response, hopefully, from the State Department and foreign officials." Thus, Pang credited media attention with the ability

both to move action on the treaty ahead in time and to move action on particular cases higher within the State Department hierarchy.

As it turned out, implementation did not sail through quite so easily as Pang expected. The State Department did transmit their draft of the legislation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House early in March. However, in a break with usual procedures, State failed to notify Dixon or any other legislator that the transmittal had occurred. In a subsequent interview, Pang characterized this as "very unusual," particularly for legislation that had already received substantial publicity. She interpreted it as an attempt to "get even" by making it appear that State had done its job but Dixon had not. "We were bashing them around a lot during this time," Pang said. "[They] made us look bad. That's for sure."

It was June before the legislation was formally introduced in the Senate by Simon with Dixon and others as co-sponsors and in the House by Rep. Thomas Lantos (D-CA). But even then the legislation did not "sail through" because of higher priority items on the Senate agenda including confirmation hearings on the ill-fated nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. However, as the legislation worked its way through Congress, the State Department, at last, also began to act. In October, Dixon marked these actions with another news conference featuring Patricia Roush. Noting the establishment of an office to "handle inquiries from American parents" as the New York Times phrased it, Dixon claimed some progress in moving individual abduction cases higher on the State Department's agenda. However, he also told the Department to remember that "we mean business" and outlined additional legislation he planned to introduce that would make international child abductions a federal crime. That legislation died in the

Judiciary Committee but early in 1988 the implementation legislation received the final approval of both houses and in April it was signed by President Reagan. The problem of abductions to countries not party to the Hague Convention remained on the policy agenda, however, and Patricia Roush's children remained in Saudi Arabia.

Looking back over the entire process, Judy Wagner, legislative assistant to Senator Simon, said that media attention may have moved the legislation more quickly but that its long history and bipartisan support would have been sufficient to move it "sooner or later." Dixon's additional legislation had no such history and the attention he was able to focus upon it, apparently, was not sufficient to move it at all. But if all Dixon managed to do was to move the implementation legislation ahead in time (as well as move attention to specific cases higher in the bureaucracy), his efforts are a good, work-a-day example of policy agenda-setting. Dixon tilted 'looking-glass media' to reflect favorably upon his framing of the abduction cases and unfavorably upon the State Department's stand. Indeed, by skillfully using the media to multiply the image of a tearful mother, he erected a hall of mirrors around the State Department and forced it to find a way out. It is to the construction of this hall of media mirrors that we now turn.

THE MEDIA RUSH

In Chicago, the Johnstad and Roush cases were, of course, a good local story. By the time the "60 Minutes" segment aired, the Tribune had already run a story reviewing the abduction of Roush's children and Dixon's efforts to retrieve them. While the article quoted Sarah Pang, it made no mention of the policy issues raised by international child abductions. On the morning before the "60 Minutes" broadcast,

the Sun-Times tried to take local control by running a story on the Johnstad case which it had obtained from the Better Government Association. This article made no mention of policy issues either. Two days later the Sun-Times followed up with an article that tried to take some of the credit for breaking the story: "As outlined in Sunday's Chicago Sun-Times and in an investigation by CBS' '60 Minutes' and the Better Government Association, the problem has touched the lives of at least two Chicago-area men." The article went on to briefly review the Johnstad case and another case that had been identified in a BGA press release issued the previous day. This article did begin to locate the cases within a policy context thanks to Simon aid, Judy Wagner, who succeeded in framing the cases as examples of the more than 2,000 international child abductions that might be solved by implementation of the Hague Convention treaty.

It was nine days later that Dixon masterfully seized control of the media agenda with a news conference that directed attention toward his highest priority abduction case as well as the Hague Convention. The Sun-Times and Tribune portrayed the conference as the tearful plea of a local citizen for help from her government. "My government will not help me," both papers quoted Patricia Roush as saying. "What am I supposed to do? Forget my children?" Near the end of the Tribune's story, much as in the Sun-Times' version, Dixon was quoted as calling the situation "an outrage" and urging "Secretary of State George Schultz to take specific action in the Roush case and to urge worldwide ratification of the Hague Convention..."

Dixon's news conference also managed to return the issue to the national media. The Christian Science Monitor reprised the Roush case and accepted Dixon's framing of the issue by casting the State

Department as the villain of the scenerio for failure to aggressively pursue return of the children. The story quoted a State Department spokesman who said that the Department would not take the side of one parent over another. But Dixon was given the last word. Taking sides was not the issue, the Senator said, because custody of Roush's children had already been decided by an American court. The State Department could help Roush, Dixon insisted, with "a simple phone call" to the Saudi government. A few days after this story, the Monitor editorialized on behalf of "child hostages abroad" urging the State Department to make retrieval of abducted children a priority.

Three weeks after the broadcast, the Norway Times which had begun it all three years before, followed up with a story on the questioning of the Norwegian Foreign Minister in that country's national assembly. The minister, finding himself in a situation familiar, no doubt, to many others who have had a brush with "60 Minutes," explained to his colleagues that ministry officials declined to be interviewed for the segment because, as the newspaper paraphrased his remarks, "selections of interviews would be used to present the story as the program producer saw fit and this would not take the Norwegian side of the story sufficiently into account." The story noted Dixon's activities as one response to the segment but it also cited foreign ministry officials who "largely discounted the effects of the program" at least for Norway. The article concluded with a wry comment from a Norwegian government spokesman who said that the only reactions from the American public that had been detected by embassy officials were either anger with the one-sided segment or else amazement that American law does not apply in Norway.

A few months later, in March 1987, Harald Johnstad re-emerged in the national media with an appearance in People. Under the theme of "Kids Caught in the Middle," Johnstad was portrayed as man betrayed neither by Norway nor the State Department but, more conventionally, by his ex-wife who had taken the children. Johnstad was presented along with other parents whose cases were the most bizarre examples that could be gleaned from the annals of child custody disputes. These included a man whose ex-wife had married a "confessed-mobster-turned-government-informant" and had taken the man's child into hiding as well as a couple whose adopted son was being reclaimed by the Indian tribe into which he had been born. The headline act in this tribute to parental agony, however, was "Baby M" who was said to be celebrating her first birthday by awaiting a decision on whether her father or surrogate mother would "take her home."

In April Sarah Pang began negotiations with the staff of The Oprah Winfrey Show for a program on international child abductions to be packaged by Dixon's staff and featuring Patricia Roush. Such a program was never produced but by June, Roush was back in the media spotlight. "Patricia Roush's case has come to the fore again," reported the Christian Science Monitor, "this time at a congressional hearing a few days ago." In her testimony to a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee investigating alleged human rights abuse of Americans in Saudi Arabia, Roush was quoted as saying, "What am I supposed to do? Forget my children?" In this appearance, Roush was joined by another of Dixon's constituents, Kristin Uhlman. According to the New York Times version of the hearings, Uhlman said that she had been imprisoned when she tried to retrieve her children who had been taken to Saudi Arabia by their father. The Monitor, unlike the Times which

treated the hearings as hard news, used a variety of sources to review the cultural differences between the U.S. and Muslim societies as well as the difficulties faced by the State Department when trying the help parents like Roush and Uhlman. However, the last word went once again to Dixon who said that Roush was "a genuinely good woman who has suffered an outrageous injustice."

A few days later the Chicago Tribune rehearsed the Roush case once again, this time as a local feature story headlined "Love becomes an international battlefield." And then in September, the Tribune's widely syndicated columnist, Bob Greene, repackaged the Roush case with several other "vignettes" of vanished, kidnapped or murdered children. The column, he said, was intended to correct the fact that "the subject of missing children" was receiving less media attention than in the past. Greene kept politics out of this column but he did quote Sarah Pang who empathized with Roush's daughters: "These little girls must be so confused and so hurt and so scared." Greene also quoted Roush who seemed to deviate a little from previous scripts. "Right now I feel my only hope is Jesse Jackson," she said.

Meanwhile, the Chicago papers found a case with happy ending. Two little boys had been retrieved by an Illinois State Police officer from Mexico where they had been taken by their father who had been indicted for murder in Illinois. The re-unification of mother and children, according to the Sun-Times, "fired the interest of Sen. Alan J. Dixon (D-Ill.), who plans legislation this fall to attack the problem of international parent [sic] abduction." Sarah Pang was on hand to report that the Hague Convention legislation would create a State Department office to deal with cases such this as well as "the ongoing ordeal of Patricia Roush."

In the fall, just as substantive action on treaty implementation finally got underway, the Chicago newspapers seemed to lose interest in the story. The New York Times, however, briefly noted that the State Department, "under pressure from several members of Congress," had agreed to establish a bureau to handle inquiries from American parents of children abducted to foreign countries. While this story was essentially a report on Dixon's news conference announcing his bill to make abductions a federal crime, Patricia Roush was quoted as saying that these developments were "signs of hope." The Monitor also summarized these developments in a story headlined "Climate improving for return of abducted American children."

The progress of the implementation legislation through Congress and to the White House in early 1988 went largely unnoticed. The Tribune devoted one paragraph to House passage in March. And in June, the Washington Post noted the last steps of implementation with a three paragraph editorial. But if the details of the legislative process could not hold the attention of the media, individual cases of child abduction continued to do so. In January as the treaty legislation was working its way through Congress "The Phil Donohue Show" repackaged the Kristin Uhlman case as part of a xenophobic exercise emphasizing the danger to American girls of seduction by a "generous, charismatic, handsome, rich" Arab student, as Uhlman described her ex-husband. In July, the Times found another American girl who had once been attracted to an "exotically sophisticated" Egyptian and had lost her children. The ubiquitous Sarah Pang, now identified as an aid to "the leading Congressional backer of legislation to help parents," was quoted as saying that the treaty was "a great first step." But the story also noted that the Saudis were

not signatories to the treaty. "The more you work on these," said Pang, "the more unbelievable it seems how little we can do..."

In her look back across these events, Simon and Judy Wagner expressed grudging admiration for the skill shown by Dixon and his staff in exploiting case work for maximum publicity but she added, "I don't know a senator who wouldn't take advantage of the ability to get good press on an issue. Members will always talk about what their role was in resolving these sad situations." The cynical observer will note only that Dixon's efforts earned coverage of value in the 'constant campaign.' The more charitable observer might concur with the Monitor's characterization of Dixon's behavior as policy leadership. In any case, these abduction incidents, much like the crime incidents that became a crime wave, were subsidized by officials and thematized by the media, and they served the ends of both officials and media. But unlike the crime wave which, according to Fishman, had a clear and enduring ideological value for the power structure of the city, the portrayal of the abductions was more ideologically ambiguous. And in that ambiguity we can glimpse the contradictions of media power in postmodern media culture.

THE LIMITS OF MASS-MEDIATED POWER

Like the events of Watergate, the events of our case study were not so much a 'battle for public opinion' waged through the media as a 'policy game' played between media and elites before a 'bystander public.' Unlike the far more dramatic events of Watergate, however, our case study offers no journalistic or political heroics. The review of game highlights shows only the most common plays: information subsidies, pseudo-events and so on. But precisely because this case concerns an instance of politics-as-usual, it offers an

insight into constraints upon mass-mediated power that operate under the everyday conditions of the contemporary media environment.

The notion that the media can be a constraint upon, rather than a conduit of, governmental power is an idea usually taken much more seriously by media practitioners than media scholars. While practitioners often celebrate what they take to be the tradition of media-as-adversary-to-power, scholars most often emphasize the role of the media in the legitimization of power. However, even the most critical of scholars would probably be willing to acknowledge that occasionally the media do probe rather than paper over the cracks in the social structure for, as Gouldner (1976:109) points out, the competitiveness of capitalist production assures that "each economic unit is quite ready to profit from disaster to another." Further, such behavior may also be in the media's best long-term ideological interest for, as Hallin (1985:124) argues, the media must "maintain the integrity of the process of communication on which their own legitimacy depends." Thus, adversarialism survives because the news media need a measure of legitimacy as "honest brokers" of information and opinion; though, of course, adversarialism co-exists in a state of tension (if not contradiction) with the process of legitimization.

However, in this case - except, perhaps, for the glancing blow struck by "60 Minutes" at the Norwegain government - there is not the barest hint of adversarialism at work. Those media such as the Christian Science Monitor that paid any attention at all to policy developments made Senator Dixon the leader on this issue and his aid, Sarah Pang, the source for information. The Monitor did attend to the cultural context of the abductions cases and to the diplomatic difficulties of the issue. Nonetheless, it dutifully covered Dixon's

press conferences; it readily accepted his framing of the issue; and it helped to amplify his demands for action by the Senate and the State Department. The Monitor's coverage was the most comprehensive and serious-minded but, in Bennett's (1988) terms, it was also the most "normalized;" that is, it was the most committed to the vision (if not the illusion) of elites taking charge of a problem and making the system work on behalf of its citizens.

While the tradition of adversarialism cannot be found here even in the best reporting, there is another far older tradition at work that does constrain mass-mediated political power - not by countering it but rather by dissipating it. This tradition is at work in both the best and the worst reporting for it is the tradition of journalistic storytelling itself. The producer of the "60 Minutes" segment could hardly have been more clear about her role as storyteller. "Our focus is on the individual cases whose stories we are able to tell," she said. "We don't do the broad issues at '60 Minutes.'" Even the Christian Science Monitor could not resist the tales of victimage and villainy and, in fact, it really only paid very much attention to policy developments when Dixon created a tear-streaked pseudo-event. In the refined, Eastern Establishment pages of the Monitor, just as in the populist pages of People, there were good people who had been wronged, bureaucrats whose behavior was a outrage and little children far, far from home. "It's interesting," concluded Judy Wagner, "that the press cared a lot about developments in the individual cases while they basically ignored our releases about the legislation." The result was once again, in Bennett's (1988) terms, the 'fragmented' and 'personalized' coverage so often noted by press critics.

This logic of particularism - the fascination with the vivid instance and the focus on the dramatic case - that lies at the heart of the storytelling tradition should not be confused with journalistic ineptness or indifference. This sort of media logic insists upon the utmost care in the documentation and presentation of the particular case. Specific facts must be verified as accurate and so, for example, Jan Legnitto could not accept the information subsidy from the fathers, or even WBBM and the BGA, without a laborious confirmation and reconstruction of their stories. But her efforts in this regard also illustrate the irony inherent in the logic of particularism. The Norwegian government became the villain of her drama because its behavior could be documented. The cultural context of the government's behavior, however, did not become part of the segment because, according to Legnitto, this sort of material "confuses people" and "you have to deal with what you can fit in a 15 minute piece." Even more to the point, this sort of material did not fit the plotline of victimage and villainy.

The cultural context was not the only sort of contextual information that did not fit the plotline. "60 Minutes" did not report that Norway accounted for about 12 of more than 2000 cases (2300 by a State Department count in January 1987) nor did most stories about Patricia Rouse mention that Saudi Arabia accounted for about 15 of them by State Department count. No stories addressed the question of how many, or which, foreign governments participated in abductions or how many cases were involved. When Legnitto was pressed about this, her response was that her segment had been "carefully worded" so as to not actually say that governments participated in all of the cases. And finally, no stories addressed the question of

international abductions as a percentage of all child abductions. The policy attention to international abductions could have been characterized as another example of "client politics"--narrowly focussed benefits and widely shared costs (Wilson, 1980)--if viewed within the context of all child abduction and custody cases. However, the nature of the individual cases made all such "base rate" information seem irrelevant if not heartless. "You don't need a lot of numbers to get attention to this issue," said Judy Wagner. "The individual cases are enough to do it."

While the journalistic logic of particularism allowed certain information about the cases to be systematically suppressed it also allowed the cases to indiscriminantly recycled and rethematized until any coherent sense of 'the story' or 'the issue' was lost. What was the story here? According to "60 Minutes" the children were "missing?" but according to Bob Greene they were definitely missing. People knew where they were: "caught in the middle." The Tribune suggested that they were the casualties "when love becomes international battlefield" but the Monitor thought that they had been taken as "hostages." What, then, was the issue here? Sometimes it was the treachery of a foreign government and sometimes it was the indifference of the American government. Sometimes it was the erotic dangers of foreigners and sometimes it was the collapse of the American family. Sometimes it was a legal technicality concerning the documentation needed to take children from the country and sometimes it was a sign of these degraded times when our children are in constant danger. It seems pointless to ask about the real story or the real issue; they have self-deconstructed before our very eyes.

And so, our little episode of agenda-setting turns out to be about the press-public-policy connection under conditions very like those specified by Baudrillard as "hyperreality" where media imagery no longer constructs a coherent social reality thereby contributing to social control but rather, "implodes" the social thereby hurling a jumble of brightly reflective but incoherent fragments into audience consciousness. Ceremonies of control give way to spectacles of abandon in which it is difficult to make any coherent sense of the world at all through media content. In this context, the weirdly fragmented 'incidental effects' experienced by the hapless spectators who witnessed the "Missing?" segment of "60 Minutes" seem perversely appropriate. Their experience seems to mock the notion of an agenda, indeed, to mock the very idea of a secure and orderly connection - whether democratic or hegemonic - between press, public and policy.

And yet we are reluctant to reject reality for hyperreality. We are particularly reluctant to reject the reality of power relations for a Baudrillardian "political economy of the sign." Baudrillard has made Disneyland the metaphor for all social life; but we ought not confuse the hyperreal experiences of vacationers riding through that quintessential simulacrum with the real experiences of, say, employees working in the tunnels beneath it. Similarly, we ought not confuse the individual stories expropriated by People with the institutional power mapped (and normalized) by the Christian Science Monitor. Behind Disneyland there is a large and powerful corporation and behind the media portrayals of abducted children there are politicians who stood to benefit from the creation of "truth effects," federal bureaucracies whose agendas succumbed to mass-mediated pressure and legislation that - no matter what the level of media attention - would

probably have moved "sooner or later." We take all of this as evidence of political power that is still real enough to matter.

"The discourses of postmodernism are undoubtedly both too anxious and too immodest," acknowledges Grossberg (1988:271) expressing a reluctance to make the "leap into such highly charged abstractions as the 'disappearance of the real.'" And yet, he realizes that the postmodernists have begun to confront a cultural crisis. "It is a crisis of the very possibility of politics, not in a form which negates the very real and continuing construction of ideological, economic, state and libidinal regimes of power," he argues (1988:290). "It is rather a problematization of the very ability to articulate these structures..." For the study of agenda-setting and, more generally, the study the press-public-policy connection to contribute anything useful to the articulation of structures of power, we must embrace uncertainty in media content and contradiction in media effect rather than dismiss them as merely 'unexplained variance.' We must recognize that media logic - the epistemology of the particular - contains within it the counterpoised tendencies toward both the imposition of meaning and the dissipation of meaning - that normalization can be frustrated by fragmentation - and that it may be impossible to predict how these tendencies will 'play out' in any particular situation.

Perhaps, then, we should take more seriously a metaphor used by both political scientists and postmodernists: politics-as-game. Molotch, Protess & Gordon (1987), for example, invoke that conception in their analysis of Watergate when they refuse to assign credit for the outcome to either media or Congress:

Instead, the Watergate "correction" was the result of the ways in which news of the Nixon scandals fit the goals and

strategic needs of important media and policy actors. All of these actors, each with some degree of "relative autonomy" [Dreier, 1982], are best seen not as a series of discrete forces which can be allotted partial variance in some static modeling of influence. Instead, they are a part of an evolving "ecology of games" [Long, 1958]... Because they so continuously anticipate each other's moves, their activities are, as a matter of course, mutually constituted. (1987:45, original emphasis)

Politics is now a game played under the rules of postmodern media culture, a "game of truth effects" as Baudrillard maintains but also a game of real power as Smith (1988) assumes. It is a game in which the public more often consumes political spectacle than participates in self-government, but it is also a game in which the spectators can still sometimes bound from the stands onto the field. As Lang and Lang (1983) maintain, the knowledge that such a thing can happen does make a difference to the way in which both media and elites play the game. But whatever the play, the score still matters.

This conception, alas, diminishes the agenda-researcher's hope for powerfully predictive generalizations about public opinion and public policy. Understanding is never beyond hope, of course, but the conceptual language in which it is expressed will be drawn less from the vocabulary of predictable cause and effect than the vocabulary of infinitely malleable strategy and tactics. "This more ecological view of the media-policy process loses the advantage of neat research designs characteristic of the effects studies and substitutes the less exact methods of ethnography and history," argue Molotch and colleagues (1987:46). "We give up testing the proposition that, as a general rule, media reports cause or do not cause opinion or policy consequences." But if research on agenda-setting at the institutional level of analysis must, to some extent, always be an exercise in ethnographic complexity and historical singularity, that research can

still yield rich and rewarding accounts of policy games. A policy game yet to be played may be no more predictable than, say, a World Series game yet to be played, but we can still account for how games have gone and, what's more, appreciate The Game itself: the process of governance in the media age. Even at the postmodern moment that is something real enough and important enough to care about.

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TABLE ONE

COMPARISON OF "60 MINUTES" VIEWERS' AND NON-VIEWERS
ATTITUDES TOWARD 'MISSING CHILDREN' AND INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION

	<u>Pre-test</u>		<u>Post-test 1</u>		<u>Post-test 2</u>	
	Viewers (n=96)	Non- Viewers (n=505)	Viewers (n=96)	Non- Viewers (n=505)	Viewers (n=74)	Non- Viewers (n=111)
Rated importance of missing children (4= very important)	3.63	3.69	3.55	3.66	3.51	3.57
Rank-ordered importance of missing children (1= most important)	3.54	3.06	3.38	2.84	3.15	3.03
International treaties are not needed (4=agrees strongly)	1.99	1.95	1.81	1.94	2.03	1.86
U.S. government likely to help American Citizens (4= agree strongly)	2.88	2.82	2.70	2.83	2.62	2.33
Respect of Norway toward U.S.law (4=very respectful)	3.47	3.37	2.75*	3.33	2.87**	3.13

*Comparison of Viewers and Non-Viewers adjusting for pre-test differences was statistically significant at $p < .01$

**Comparison of Viewers and Non-Viewers adjusting for pre-test differences was statistically significant at $p < .05$

TABLE TWO
COMPARISON OF "60 MINUTES" VIEWERS' AND NON-VIEWERS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD POLICY OPTIONS
AND PERCEPTIONS OF 'VILLAINS'

	Post-Test 2	
	Viewers (n=74)	Non-Viewers (n=111)
<u>Policy Options</u>		
Should U.S. do something? (4=Definitely should)	3.09	2.91
Treaty to return abducted kids (6=completely agree)	4.67	4.38
Law against abducting kids to foreign countries	4.56	4.51
State Department pressure on foreign leaders	4.22	4.07
Require airlines to check kids leaving U.S.	3.84	3.91
<u>Villain Perceptions</u>		
Father or mother more likely to abduct? (1=father, 2=mother)	1.23*	1.09
Average ranking of likely destinations for abductors (1=most likely destination)		
Mexico	2.17**	1.58
Norway	2.69**	4.05
France	2.98	2.67
W. Germany	3.24*	2.85
Saudi Arabia	3.70	3.78

*Comparison of viewers and non-viewers statistically significant at p.<05 (t-test)

**Comparison of viewers and non-viewers statistically significant at p.<01 (t-test)